

Friday 11 August 2023

St Clare of Assisi



Clare was born into a wealthy family in Assisi in 1193. She caught the joy of Francis of Assisi's new gospel vision. She wanted a contemplative way of life so escaped from her home. She first joined a Benedictine community then a Béguine-style group. She later founded her own community which lived in corporate poverty (understood as dependence on God). It was unusual for its day in its fresh, democratic lifestyle.

Clare became the first woman to write a religious Rule for women and used it to great liberty of spirit in dealing with earlier prescriptions. During the long years after Francis' death, she supported his earlier companions in their desire to remain faithful to his vision.

Her last words were said to be, 'Blessèd be God, for having created me.'

Sermon and prayers of intercession © Nicola Williams.

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The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 All creatures of our God and King

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for Assisi

God of peace,
who in the poverty of the blessed Clare
gave us a clear light to shine in the darkness of this world:
give us grace so to follow in her footsteps
that we may, at the last, rejoice with her
 in your eternal glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of the Prophet Hosea

I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give back her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And I will take you for my spouse forever; I will take you for my spouse in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for my spouse in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.

Hosea 2:14-15, 19-20

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

2 Corinthians 4:6-10

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Kyrie eleison

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.'

John 15:4-10

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

I have spent the last weekend doing two things that I absolutely love.

1. I visited a very large church in Salford for my job, and
2. I, and other family members, went to my allotment and harvested the summer vegetables and fruits. And I am pleased to say that we had a good harvest.

I mention my weekend because these two facts influenced the way I think of St Clare and how she lived her life.

As we look at St Clare and the life she led, we can see that she was a determined woman who successfully led others to live austere lives in the service of God. The way she lived her life was powerfully different and she attracted both men and women to walk her path of service to God and Christ.

St Clare was devout and insisted on living a life of austerity, shunning all possessions and material wealth, following closely in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi before her. Such was her dedication to Christ that she was even credited with repelling two separate invasions with prayer. Incidentally, in 1958 Clare was designated the Patron Saint of television because she was said to have seen a Christmas service of Midnight Mass projected in light on the wall of her room before she died.

The thought of St Clare ever seeing a television is beyond comprehension because TVs were not invented back in 1194 when she was born, but also because Clare famously rejected any form of monetary gain or any possessions. She and those who lived with her, lived frugal lives severely restricted of any comfort save that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even conversation was seen as unproductive and therefore unnecessary. The lives of the men and women were no doubt difficult, but they sustained themselves and each other with their faith and commitment to serving God.

They too will have grown their own food as I do in a plot that perhaps looked much as mine does ... but that is where the comparisons end.

So, what has that got to do with my visit to the big church in Salford? Well actually, the sermon that day focused upon stewardship of our money: that we have a duty to spend our money well to give 'every pound a purpose' because a steward looks after something until the original owner wants it back. Good stewards will have been careful and have used their money well, perhaps earning interest on what they have.

Thinking about this on the way home, it occurred to me that we are stewards of everything. Everything that we have we have been given by God to look after; our bodies, our money, our gifts and talents, our families—everything is given to us on a temporary basis and God wants us to use what we have in a good way so that

when He asks us what we did with our gifts, we will be able to show Him that we have used them to the best of our abilities. We must use what we have not only to benefit ourselves, but also others. What we have in this world is not ours; we might think we do, but we don't earn anything at all. It's all a gift. And if that is the case, then what we do with our lives really does matter.

St Clare knew this, and she knew that she had been given a Spirit that yearned to serve God in a specific way, and so she did it to her utmost ability, shunning every distraction.

That God gives us what we have is clear throughout the Bible and even today in the reading from Hosea in which God says that He *gives us vineyards, He opens doors of hope*. He is not saying that *we* make vineyards or that *we* can open doors of hope, the action is God's alone ... In Genesis 2:15 God gives humankind the Garden of Eden and tells Adam and Eve that they must 'dress it and keep it'. In other words, to steward it well. Think about Moses—he was given a whole people to steward and look after. Then there are the workers given five, two and one talent of money to look after in the book of Matthew 25:14–30. I could go on.

St Clare knew that possessions and riches are not, in fact, valuable. What was of worth was what she did with what she had. And she must have known that her talents and gifts were best used in the service of God and not self-betterment. Indeed, Clare fled her family's wealth and her relatively settled and easy life to begin a life of restriction and, let's face it, hardship.

In the same way, in today's Gospel reading we see that Jesus tells the disciples that they can do nothing without Him. Put differently, He *gives them* the ability to achieve and if they abide in Him, they will bear fruit. They will not achieve anything unless they live their lives serving God and Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples,

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

He then goes on to say,

because apart from me you can do nothing.

It's hard to think that we 'can do nothing'. We tend to think that everything we achieve is down to hard work or even luck! The way we think about many things has changed over the years. Let's stick with growing crops: there are many references to gardening and tending things in the Bible because that was a huge aspect of daily living—and perhaps one that we have grown immune to. Today, if

I want a meal, I go to the supermarket and buy Italian olives, French cheese, and some nice Argentinian wine. It takes me ten minutes to buy and a further ten to serve everything on my plate. Easy. I haven't had to dig, sow, tend, weed, feed, and then pick. I don't have to own my own herd of cows or plant my own vineyard. Someone else has done it for me and I just reap the rewards. I have not had to steward anything and, crucially, the meal will only feed the people I bought it for—the community does not benefit. I benefit.

Jesus tells us that faith does not work like this. Faith is understanding that what we have has been given to us. We cannot make God give us faith. We cannot choose our family (as the saying goes). We get what we are given. We have no choice ... Except the choice to steward well what we do have.

When we choose to live as Christ wants us to live, we are choosing to steward our faith. We are taking what we have been given and sharing it with others, we are displaying our faith in the way we live our lives. We are making decisions every day that Jesus calls us to make knowing that one day God will want us to account for what we have done.

Being a steward is not always easy; St Clare knew that. She felt called to give everything that she had been given back to God in the form of worship, prayer, and service. She could have chosen the easy life offered by her family, but she didn't. Instead, she inspired ordinary people and Popes alike to live holy lives. She remains an example of commitment and service to God and to this day, there are thousands of people across the world who live to the rules of the Order of Saint Clare.

We cannot all live like Clare. Clare had her special gifts and we have ours. What we can do is think about what we have been given—even the things we have that we don't necessarily like—and then think about how we can use these things better.

My family helped me harvest the allotment and I gave away half of that harvest. I hope that it will be used to feed and nurture others. When I leave here today, I might call a friend just to check in, using a mobile phone that someone else designed and built with their own special talents and gifts. It's the simple things that we can choose to do with what we have that really can set the world alight and show God working in our midst.

The best thing about all of this of course, is that each of us is different but each of us has gifts and talents. God has not left anyone out; we all have something special that we can use to benefit others. Today's challenge ... is to go out and be fruitful as only you can; use what you have to spread some joy, to make someone feel loved or simply sit with someone and offer companionship ... and watch Christ work in you!

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Lord Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the gifts and talents you have given to each of us. Help us to recognise what we have been given and to steward our gifts for the benefit of others. Help us to see gifts and talents in everyone and to help them to use these to the best of their ability. We understand that each of us is different, and that each of us has something special. Lord God, we ask that what we have been given, we can grow and allow to flourish in service to You.

Lord in Your Mercy,

All Hear our prayer.

Creator God,

We thank you for all of creation, for the parts that fill us with awe, and for the parts that fill us with dread. All of it is special because all of it is Yours. Help us to protect Your creation, Lord, to nurture it and not to abuse it in the pursuit of financial gain. We ask that those who have been given a passion for cultivation, for conservation

and for caring for this planet and its peoples, use their gifts to the best of their abilities, and that those who have become leaders, come together to make decisions that will preserve and cherish life of all kinds.

Lord in Your Mercy,

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord,

We thank you for our families and for those we love. We thank you for loving us so deeply even when we know that this love has not been earned. Lord you have filled each of us with the ability to love, help us demonstrate this in the way we live our lives, caring for all that we meet and all that we share our lives with. Help us to love each other as you love us.

Lord in Your Mercy,

All Hear our prayer.

Creator God,

We thank you for our churches and for all who lead them. We thank you for the body of Christ, the global Church. We often feel that we worship You in isolation, that we are just one person or one church, and we forget that Your Church comprises a billion believers. We pray with thanksgiving that we are free to worship You openly and we pray for those who must worship You privately due to oppression and fear. Help us to unite as a global body of believers so that every prayer is for 'Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.'

Lord in Your Mercy,

All Hear our prayer.

Lord Heavenly Father,

We pray for those we know, and those we do not know, who are struggling with sickness of mind, body, or Spirit. Help them feel Your strength, Your peace, and Your comfort. Give those who care for the sick the skills and talents to support patients through the difficult times and to help them to heal and give families and loved ones the patience they need to help them to care for those they love. We pray also, Lord, for those who have died and we acknowledge that the pain we feel in their passing, is testament to the love we had for them in their living.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 As we are gathered, Jesus is here

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 At the name of Jesus

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.
In communion with angels and archangels,
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Clare and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Clare
that she served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.